

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 CANBER 01477 260155Z

15

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /066 W

----- 008212

R 260116Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7581

INFO USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 1477

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AS PINT

SUBJECT: ALLEGED CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION FROM IRAQUI DIPLOMATS  
SHATTERS ALP

1. SUMMARY: STORIES APPEARED IN TWO MURDOCH NEWSPAPERS, THE AUSTRALIAN AND THE DAILY TELEGRAPH ON FEBRUARY 26 STATING THAT OPPOSITION LEADER GOUGH WHITLAM AND ALP FEDERAL SECRETARY DAVID COOMBE MET SECRETLY WITH TWO IRAQUI DIPLOMATS ON DECEMBER 10 AND DISCUSSED RECEIVING A US DOLS 500,000 CONTRIBUTION TO THE ALP FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ IN RETURN FOR THE ALP'S TAKING PRO-ARAB POSITIONS ON FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS. THIS REPORT HAS SHOCKED ALP MEMBERS AND AT THE MOMENT IT APPEARS THAT WHITLAM WILL BE SACKED AS ALP LEADER. END SUMMARY

2. WHITLAM AND COOMBE DID MEET WITH IRAQUI FOREIGN MINISTER OFFICIALS FAROUK ABDULLA YEHZA AND GHAFIL JASSIM AL TAHRITA IN SYDNEY ON DECEMBER 30. THE MEETING WAS HARDLY SECRET. WHITLAM CAME TO IT AND FROM IT IN A COMMONWEALTH CAR WITH A POLICE ESCORT. ALP SENATOR TERRY SIBRAA TOLD EMBOFF THAT IT WAS A ROUTINE COURTESY CALL BY WHIT-  
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PAGE 02 CANBER 01477 260155Z

LAM ON TWO VISITORS FROM A SOCIALIST STATE. WHITLAM

HAD ONLY STAYED FOR TEN MINUTES AND NO DISCUSSION OF CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS TOOK PLACE. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS WITH EMBOFF, ALP SENATOR JOHN WHEELDON, ALP SENATORS JAMES MCCLELLAND, AND ALP REPRESENTATIVE KIM BEAZLEY ALL WERE CONVINCED THAT WHITLAM AND COOMBE WENT MUCH FARTHER THAN THAT AND THAT AN AGREEMENT TO ACCEPT IRAQI MONEY WAS MADE. IN THEIR VIEW, WHITLAM'S CONDUCT WAS BEYOND BELIEF, HAD SERIOUSLY DAMAGED THE ALP'S FUTURE PROSPECTS ESPECIALLY IN FORTHCOMING STATE ELECTIONS, AND MADE IT NECESSARY FOR THE PARTY TO SACK WHITLAM AS LEADER. MHR MICK YOUNG, PREVIOUSLY ONE OF WHITLAM'S STRONGEST PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORTERS AND FORMER ALP FEDERAL SECRETARY, HAS BROKEN WITH WHITLAM AND COOMBE AS WELL.

3. ALP FEDERAL PRESIDENT BOB HAWKE, WHO CURIOUSLY ENOUGH WAS IN ISRAEL WHEN THE STORY BROKE, IS FLYING BACK TO AUSTRALIA TO HOLD A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE ALP'S FEDERAL EXECUTIVE. HAWKE IS ONE OF THE STRONGEST ISRAELI SUPPORTERS IN AUSTRALIA. HAWKE WILL DEAL RUTHLESSLY WITH WHITLAM AND COOMBE IF THE ALLEGATIONS ARE CORRECT, AND ALP ASSISTANT SECRETARY KEN BENNETT TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE NEWSPAPER STORIES WERE ESSENTIALLY CORRECT.

4. COMMENT: WHITLAM IS ALWAYS HIS TOUGHEST IN A CRISIS SITUATION. HE IS CLAIMING THAT RUPERT MURDOCH HAD DINNER WITH PRIME MINISTER FRASER ON THE EVENING OF FEBRUARY 25 PRIOR TO PRINTING THE STORY AND THAT IT IS JUST ANOTHER ATTEMPT BY MURDOCH TO DESTROY HIM. WHITLAM HAS ALSO INSTRUCTED HIS LAWYERS TO SUE THE TWO MURDOCH NEWSPAPERS WHICH PRINTED THE STORIES FOR DEFAMATION. HE WILL THEN CLAIM, PROBABLY CORRECTLY, THAT NO DISCUSSIONS OF CONTRIBUTIONS TOOK PLACE WHILE HE WAS IN THE ROOM AND TRY TO BLAME ALP SECRETARY DAVID COOMBE FOR THE WHOLE AFFAIR. THIS TIME VETERAN ALP MEMBERS ARE NOT CONVINCED THAT WHITLAM WILL SUCCEED. ON THIS ISSUE HE HAS LOST THE MODERATE MEN IN THE ALP CAUCUS WHO USUALLY BACK HIM AND THE LEFT-WING WANTS TO BREAK HIM ANYWAY. THE CONSENSUS IN PARLIAMENT HOUSE IS THAT MHR KIM BEAZLEY WILL REPLACE WHITLAM AS LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION WITHIN THE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CANBER 01477 260155Z

NEXT FEW WEEKS. END COMMENT. HARGROVE

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PRESS COMMENTS, FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 26 FEB 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** SmithRJ  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976CANBER01477  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760072-0334  
**From:** CANBERRA  
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**Line Count:** 108  
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**Office:** ACTION EA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** SmithRJ  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 20 MAY 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <20 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <16 SEP 2004 by SmithRJ>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ALLEGED CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION FROM IRAQUI DIPLOMATS SHATTERS ALP  
**TAGS:** PINT, AS, IZ, ALP, (WHITLAM, GOUGH), (COOMBE, DAVID)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006